

# Against the Grain

---

Manuscript 8343

---

## ATG Interviews Anne Ostermann, Director, Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA)

Katina Strauch

Tom Gilson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries.  
Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

## Director, Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA)

by **Tom Gilson** (Associate Editor, *Against the Grain*) <gilson@cofc.edu>

and **Katina Strauch** (Editor, *Against the Grain*) <kstrauch@comcast.net>

**ATG:** Anne, you have been the Director of the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA) since May 2015. What drew you to this position? What unique experiences and skills did you bring to the job?

**AO:** I started with VIVA as the Associate Director in 2012, and the original appeal of a consortial job was the work I had done with the **Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC)** while I was at **American University**. Library consortia seemed like a great way to do more together. I had worked at many of the institution types found within VIVA — a two year community college, large public doctoral university, and mid-sized private university — so VIVA in particular seemed like a good fit. I had also worked in a variety of librarian roles on the public and technical services sides of those libraries, and I thought that breadth of experience would be helpful in understanding the needs of a consortium.

**ATG:** For those unfamiliar with VIVA, can you tell us about its mission, services, and collections? Is there anything else we should know about VIVA?

**AO:** VIVA is the consortium of nonprofit academic libraries within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Our 72 members include the 39 public colleges and universities, 32 of the independent institutions, and the **Library of Virginia**. VIVA builds a shared collection of electronic materials, has a robust resource sharing program, and is implementing a new open and affordable course content program. We work to level the academic playing field for Virginia students and faculty by ensuring that the same core educational resources are available, whether you attend a small community college or large research institution. This is the goal we keep at the forefront of all of our initiatives. Through shared projects, collections, and programs that streamline services, VIVA has saved the state incredible amounts of money and staff time over the years.

**ATG:** If you were to rank them, which VIVA services would be at the top of your list? What would you say are VIVA's collection strengths?

**AO:** The heart of VIVA is certainly its shared collection of databases, eBooks, eJournals, and streaming media. We focus on STEM-H resources to support Virginia's interest in higher education in these areas, but we hope to provide a broad enough collection to support all disciplines at a foundational level. Our robust resource sharing program, powered by a tight-knit, passionate community of ILL practitioners, is also deeply important to VIVA and has allowed our institutions to embark on shared print analysis and the development of a distributed print and eBook collection



throughout the state. We also have a new but increasingly important open and affordable course content program created through funding that began in 2018. This program works to make open and affordable course content available in order to lower overall costs, promote student success, and empower Virginia faculty to redesign their curricula.

**ATG:** VIVA's whole ebook lending program, in particular, has created some buzz in library circles. What is it and what is so unique about it?

**AO:** Beginning in 2016, VIVA gained whole eBook lending rights with four publishers: **Brill**, **Oxford University Press** (and by extension, the presses in its University Press Scholarship Online collection), **Taylor & Francis**, and **Wiley**. These are DRM-free, PDF eBooks, so the user experience via a loan is the same as if they had access to it at their own library. These rights are foundational to our long-term vision of a distributed, shared collection of books within the state. Within our **Taylor & Francis** evidence-based plan, for example, the titles we purchase are held by individual libraries, but the statewide benefit remains because of the whole eBook lending rights. There are also benefits for the publishers, from the goodwill of their customers to the added exposure of the materials requested by users that libraries may decide to translate into additional purchases. I would love if these rights were not so unique — we were hoping that it would be a tipping point in the industry — but I am not aware of any other programs as broad as ours.

**ATG:** As part of the program, VIVA has negotiated the right for VIVA institutions to lend whole eBooks via Interlibrary Loan without the use of restrictive software. How does that work? Can you elaborate? How were you able to convince your four publishing partners to agree?

**AO:** Yes, our libraries can lend the DRM-free, whole eBooks as a single file, either one available from the platform or one created by the lending library from the chapter pdfs that comprise a given title. They can send the file in the same, secure way they would usually send an individual chapter or journal article. This does not mean that it is an easy or intuitive process; we have a task force focused on making these titles more discoverable and on best practices for borrowing and lending whole eBooks. I think the two key factors in convincing our publishing partners to agree were our determination to have these rights (our RFP was written in such a way that respondents would have to respond negatively to the whole eBook lending rather than describe their interlibrary loan rights) and our ability to acquire new eBook collections with new funds. We had recently completed a monographic analysis that informed our collection development strategy with eBooks, and based on this analysis the General Assembly provided VIVA with funds to select eBooks in a data-driven, statewide way. This new funding was critical to encouraging publishers to come to the table.

**ATG:** Can you tell us more about the monographic analysis that you conducted? How did it work? What were the results? What strategies did you use to convince the General Assembly to provide new funding based on your findings?

**AO:** We partnered with **Sustainable Collection Services** from 2013-2015 to conduct a Monographic Collection Analysis that included around six million records from the main libraries at twelve institutions across VIVA. The project goals included using the data and analysis to inform future, collaborative collection development (our starting point, which seems fairly unique among these kinds of projects), identifying scarcely-held titles in need of protection, and beginning a discussion about the possibility of reducing unnecessary duplication and saving local space through strategic weeding. Ultimately, this analysis was used as the foundation for a memorandum of understanding for the rare and unique materials found in the main stacks of the participating libraries, a memorandum of understanding for 3.5 million widely held materials at eight research institutions, and a recommended threshold of four print copies

*continued on page 40*

**Interview — Anne Osterman**  
from page 39

within VIVA. Further, and in keeping with the original aims of the project, numerous shared eBook collections were negotiated and acquired using the resulting data from the collection analysis. More information about the project is available here: [http://vivalib.org/monographic\\_analysis](http://vivalib.org/monographic_analysis). With the General Assembly, we focused on how this data would enable VIVA to buy materials we knew to be broadly relevant across the consortium. We knew we could be more strategic in our approach to publishers and save the state money through a central investment, and this turned out to be a convincing approach.

**ATG:** *Are there any words of wisdom or additional advice that you can share with other library consortia interested in developing a similar program?*

**AO:** You have to be willing to speak with your funding for these rights. If we stop buying resources that don't have the rights we want and support publishers moving in a positive direction, the environment can change. An RFP process can also create a good, competitive environment for rights negotiation, and I think that it is important to emphasize the marketing power of ILL, as many libraries use ILL data to inform their collection development.

**ATG:** *VIVA's Open Textbook Network is another innovative program. Can you tell us about it? How does it work?*

**AO:** This program began as an Open Textbook Network (OTN) System Membership pilot in 2016, when we held training to create Campus Leaders (those who would hold OTN workshops on their own campuses) and funded the training of three System Leaders at the OTN Summer Institute. This program was so successful — it created \$2.5 million in student savings in its first two years — that we were able to pitch a much larger program to the General Assembly that included a course redesign grant program, expansion of the OTN program, affordable course content initiative, and two new central staff personnel. This funding request was successful, and \$600,000 was added to our annual base by the state. We are so grateful to the consortia and groups that have been innovators before us in this area, such as LOUIS, Open Oregon, and GALILEO; we were able to learn from them and customize a program that would fit within Virginia.

**ATG:** *How do you maintain quality in a program that relies on open educational resources?*

**AO:** Faculty reviews are foundational to the success of the Open Textbook Library, both as a means to introduce faculty to OER and to provide information about quality and relevance. We are just in the beginning stages of creating our own discovery portal for resources through our program, but curation and discussions with faculty will be a big part of it.

**ATG:** *Faculty buy-in is essential for a program like this. What has been the faculty's*

*response? Has it been more successful for some VIVA members than others?*

**AO:** I want to recognize first that there were already a number of OER initiatives within the state. Our community college system, particularly **Tidewater Community College**, is nationally recognized for its Z-degree program, where all textbooks for a given degree program are free to the student, and **Virginia Tech** is another standout institution, with the creation of important open textbooks. Our program was an attempt to build on these successes, and others throughout the state, to create a more statewide approach. Through our OTN pilot, we have had adoptions of open textbooks at all of our institution types — two year, four year, doctoral, and private — which was an important factor in our considering it a success. The faculty response has been most direct and enthusiastic in response to our new course redesign grant program. The grant program recognizes that faculty, regardless of enthusiasm for the idea of open and affordable, also need to be given the time, space, and resources to make these types of dramatic changes to their curricula. We released our first RFP in December, and faculty across the state at a wide variety of institutions have expressed interest in participating. This really feels like a game changer for what our faculty will be able to do.

**ATG:** *From your experience what are the most effective strategies in encouraging faculty involvement in a project like this? Which strategies haven't worked quite as well?*

**AO:** Faculty are busy and pulled in many directions; incentives such as funding or time are critical to enabling the work that goes into the adoption, adaptation, and creation of OER. A local presence is also important. Having the information about OER come from a librarian they already know and trust is much more powerful than information from a new, unfamiliar source.

**ATG:** *Anne, what do you see in VIVA's future? Are there any new projects in the offing? Do you have a "scoop" that you can share?*

**AO:** We are really excited about our new Sustainable Journal Pricing project. We are trying to create a new model for negotiation that is reflective of VIVA's consortial values, sustainable for member library budgets, and flexible enough to adapt to a more Open Access future. This work builds on the past assessment work of VIVA, including the Value Metric Project, which incorporated factors such as Open Access, faculty publishing, and usage rights into our renewal and cancellation decisions. There is a crisis point for journal subscriptions happening, particularly with regard to Big Deals, and we want to help our members negotiate the agreements they need for long-term success.

**ATG:** *This new sustainable journal pricing project sounds like a real challenge. How far along are you in developing the model? Do you have a target date for implementation? Is there a website that interested readers can go to in order to learn more?*

**AO:** It is definitely a challenge. Untangling the different funding streams for journals, Open Access, and the larger higher education business of those publishers is no small feat. We also know that we need broad consensus to achieve the leverage we need to shift the model, so communicating about this project consistently across our institutions is an important part of the task force's work. We are beginning to run numbers, focusing on content relevance to Virginia and its authors, and hope to have an approach ready for an initial discussion with publishers soon. A number of our task force members discussed this project at the 2018 **Charleston Conference** in a presentation called "Flipping the Model," and more information is available here: <http://vivalib.org/sustainablepricing>.

**ATG:** *It strikes us that being the Director of VIVA is both rewarding and challenging. However, everyone needs some down time. So, we were wondering what you do for fun and relaxation? Are there any activities that you particularly enjoy?*

**AO:** The best part of my day is playing with my daughter, and I also enjoy reading, doing yoga, and playing board games with my husband. A special treat is listening to great stand-up comedy.

**ATG:** *Anne, Thanks so much for taking time out of what we know is a very busy schedule to talk to us.*

**AO:** Thank you for the opportunity! 🐼

**Interview — Steve Potash**  
from page 38

will result in a greater appreciation for the digital book channels through libraries. One area of significant growth for publishers and authors is the global market and instant access **OverDrive** provides for eBooks and audiobooks. Today, over 40,000 institutions in 72 countries are purchasing eBooks and audiobooks under a variety of access models to serve students, readers, employees, and others worldwide. 🐼

*"A Conversation with Steve Potash" by Nancy Herther was first posted on the ATG NewsChannel website as part of Nancy's article "Publishers Still Unsettled Over The Future Of eBooks: Part 3 — Distribution Trends From Overdrive's Steve Potash." It along with links to the other two parts of the entire article are available at: <https://www.against-the-grain.com/2018/11/atg-original-publishers-still-unsettled-over-the-future-of-ebooks-part-3-distribution-trends-from-overdrives-steve-potash/>.*